Cultural Sensitivities in Building Health Capacity

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Culture, Health and Human Security in the Middle East

3 December 2008

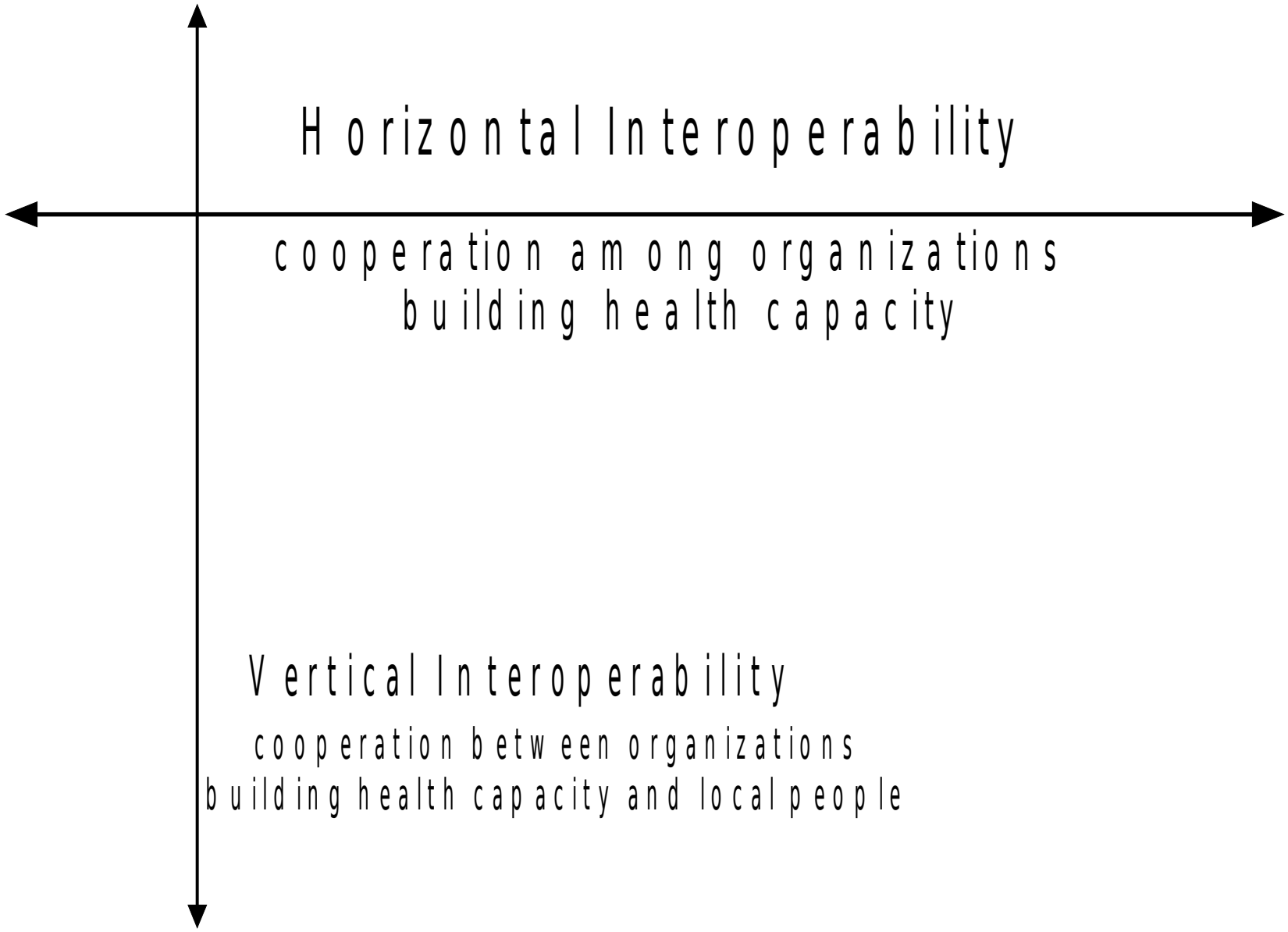
Today’s agenda

What is culture and why is it important

Culture in inter-organizational cooperation

Interventions and local culture

Medical pluralisms


Horizontal Interoperability
cooperation among organizations
building health capacity
Vertical Interoperability
cooperation between organizations
building health capacity and local people

3 Approaches to Culture

1. Travelers' Advice

   -stereotyped instructions that focus on the surface elements of culture, and most often on those surface aspects that are different or exotic from the perspective of the person giving the instruction.

Some Generalizations About Military-Civilian Organizational Culture Differences*	
Military	IGOs/NGOs
* Closely controlled * Hierarchical * Well resourced * Extensive doctrine/Standard Operating Procedures * Short term * Culturally insensitive * Precise, predictable * Highly accountable * Expeditionary, quick * One constituency * Comfortable with *status quo* * Appreciate precise tasks * "Carries the flag"	* Independent or semi-independent * Decentralized * Minimally staffed, under resourced * Few standard practices * "Long haul" * Culturally aware * Creative, unpredictable * Little accountability * May already be in the area of operation * Multiple constituencies * Idealistic "change agents" * Thrive on ambiguity * IGOs usually have official status, NGOs usually have no official status

* This table is compiled from material presented in *Civil Military Relations: Working with NGOs*, United States: InterAction, American Council for Voluntary International Action (InterAction), 41 minutes, 2002.

2. Dimensional Models of Culture

- describe groups in terms of cultural styles or dimensions which the frameworks derive from empirical research, either through comparative analysis of ethnographies, through organizational survey research, or through psychological research.

5 commonly used dimensional frameworks

- narrative resources and verbal style
- culture and context
- thinking and reasoning styles
- information processing style
- management of power and social relations.

3. Culture as meaning production

-systems of meaning groups of people use to adapt to their environments and to structure interpersonal activities

- symbols systems, having (i) representational, (ii) directive, and (iii) affective functions, and capable of creating cultural entities and particular sense of reality.*

*after Roy G. d'Andrade, 'Cultural Meaning Systems', in Richard A. Shweder and Robert A. LeVine (ed.) *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.116.

Meaning and cooperation in building health capacity: Culture and Horizontal Interoperability

- Partnership
- Cooperation
- Effect on basic “world view”

- Provides a *frame of reference* that orients but does not determine action, thought & feelings
- There is cultural variation within group
- People can hold divergent cultural views
- Culture changes – people use it to adapt to changing circumstances
- Usually operates outside of our awareness

Meaning and cooperation in building health capacity: Engaging Local Culture

- Key symbols
- Effects of conflict
- Partnership
- Cooperation

Medical Pluralism(s)

- Some levels at which culture effects developing health capacity
  - Individuals' theories of sources of health and illness.
  - What it means 'to be healthy'
  - Sources and meanings of health services
- People can hold divergent views simultaneously.

- Theories of disease vary:
  - Educational level
  - Social class
  - Occupation
  - Rural / Urban
- Some health issues invoke sense of:
  - Personhood (self)
  - Social identity
- Ideas about healthcare providers:
  - Who they are
  - What they should do.

- Trachoma in Egypt
  - Biomedical account:
    - Single disease
    - Multiple stages
    - Treatment with antibiotics
    - Prevention through better sanitation
  - Local account:
    - Multiple diseases
      - Different causes
        - » Biomedical
        - » Hot / Cold
        - » Divine
    - No single treatment
    - No single prevention

Ethno-Diagnostic Category	Biomedical Category	Symptoms	Ethnoetiology	Treatment Sphere	Treatment
Hamra	Redness, Inflammation	Redness	Heat	Home Remedies	Eyedrops or compress of strong tea (sometimes with molasses added) Tomato-one thick slice applied to the eyes as a compress "gets the red out"
Wakhada hawa	None	Redness	Cold in the eye ("It happens after a woman has finished baking bread. After she leaves the oven, her eye gets exposed to air and she catches a draft")	Home remedy	"Take a spoonful of breast milk from a dark-skinned woman and rub it into a special stone from Mecca (called wada'a) and put one drop into the sick eye every night after sunset until the eye gets better."
'Ayn warma or Il tihab al-gifn	Lid edema	Eye is swollen shut (happens most often in children)	Heat, dirty water, the will of God If a newborn has it, it might be from "bad hygiene of the mother" (i.e., not	Traditional healer (for children) Biomedical physician (adults, especially males)	The Hallaq Sahha (health barber) makes three incisions on the temple to "get the bad blood out," then he rubs

Lane, S.D.1987. *A Biocultural Study of Trachoma in an Egyptian Hamlet*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California, San Francisco. : 137-141

Lahmiyya	Follicular trachoma	Small bumps or scars on the underside of the upper eyelid	Heat, smoke, dust, sweat, dirty water, flies, dirt, urine in the eye (in children)	Traditional healer (for women and children) Biomedical physician (adults, especially males)	Red Tutya (hematite) or a piece of stone from Mecca, ground on white clay and applied by a specialist to the underside of the upper eyelid Blue Tutya (copper sulfate) - rarely used Curettage - the barber everts the upper eyelid and scrapes the bumps with his straight-edged razor Biomedical physicians evert the upper eyelid and squeeze the follicles (bumps); they do curettage as well
Shaqqa (mashquqa)	Posttrachomatis degenerative concretions (granular deposits), or Corneal abrasion, or	"Pimples under the eyelid with a feeling of sand that rubs, as if he eyelid has a	Exposure to draft or open air	Traditional healer Biomedical physician	Same treatment as for Lahmiyya: -Tutya -Curretage by the Hallaq Sahha (health

Tarfa (matrufa)	Corneal abrasion	Redness, pain, burning, and feeling that a piece of dust or hay is inside the eye	Injury- "When something from the outside enters the eyes and scratches them, such as dust or hay"	Home remedy	Breast milk from a dark-skinned woman mixed with salt and rubbed on a sea shell called mahari until it is thick and then dropped into the eye.
Sha'ra	Trichiasis (not severe)	A few eyelashes that turn inward, causing pain and excessive tearing	This is believed to be contagious. Even mentioning the name of this condition can cause it to occur. Also, contagion can occur from sleeping on a pillow of someone who had sha'ra.	Traditional healer Biomedical physician	The Hallaq Sahha plucks the lashes out The biomedical physician surgically takes a horizontal wedge out of the outside of the upper lid to pull the lashes up.
Makfi fi	Severe entropion and trichiasis	When the upper lid turns complete inside toward the eye	The will of God Washing with dirty water	Traditional heler Biomedical physician	Same as sha'ra
Nuqta bayda	Corneal opacity	"A white patch over the	Untreated tarfa (when eye is	Home remedy	Eye drops of lemon,

- Some disease explanations link to ideas about self, personhood and identity
  - Local biologies
    - How people relate to pharmaceuticals
    - Local healing practices
  - Evil Eye
- Interaction norms
  - Between patients and health providers
  - Between health providers
    - More or less sterile
- Histories of colonialism
  - Cause and reporting of HIV /AIDS
  - Interaction with international community

- Cultural sensitivities
  - Complex
  - Dynamic
  - Multiple levels